Public Information Meeting
Signal Devices at Highway/Railroad At-grade crossing (500700M)
Hamilton Street, Hartford
State Project No. 171-305
CT***fastrak***, Contract 3 (93-180)

January 21, 2014
Connecticut Department of Transportation
Newington, CT
Conference Room A

ATTENDEES:

Connecticut Department of Transportation
Timothy Wilson
Nilesh Patel
Stephen Curley
Gilbert Smart

Baker Engineering
Antonio Morelli

Public
Rory Poole

The purpose of this Public Information Meeting was to present and solicit comments from the public concerning the railroad safety pertaining to the proposed signal preemption on Hamilton Street due the construction of CTfastrak, which will be located parallel to the existing Amtrak railroad at-grade crossing on Hamilton Street. The Department invited interested parties including the City, abutting property owners, public utility companies and the operating railroad companies. The Public Information Meeting was posted on the Department's website.

The proposed improvements were presented by Mr. Antonio Morelli, Project Manager from Baker Engineering and are summarized as follows:

- A new traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of Hamilton Street and CTfastrak and at the intersection of Hamilton Street and Bartholomew Avenue. The existing traffic control signal at the intersection of Hamilton Street and New Park Avenue will be upgraded. Signals will be coordinated by way of a "closed loop" signal system which will provide for a smooth flow of traffic and minimal queuing along Hamilton Street.

- To improve visibility to the new traffic control signal at the intersection of Hamilton Street and CTfastrak, the existing railroad crossing warning devices, side mounted and cantilever flashing lights and vehicular and pedestrian gates at the railroad crossing have been upgraded and relocated.

- The Hamilton Street and CTfastrak signal will include railroad pre-emption phasing and a "preference" feature for CTfastrak.

- The traffic control signal at the intersection of Hamilton Street with New Park Avenue and Bartholomew Avenue will also include railroad preemption phasing to clear the railroad/highway crossing along with queue clearance for Hamilton Street eastbound movement at Bartholomew Avenue and westbound movement at New Park Avenue.

- In addition to the railroad preemption, detectors are provided along Hamilton Street to call a queue preemption phase at the adjacent signals at New Park Avenue and Bartholomew Avenue. When a presence is detected, a signal to the respective traffic signal will activate the queue clearance phase.

- Pedestrians will cross the railroad/highway intersection concurrent with traffic. Pedestrian crossing timings for this location have been calculated to allow sufficient time for pedestrians to cross both CTfastrak and railroad approaches and ensure that a pedestrian does not get stranded. In addition, pedestrian countdown signals have been included in the design to provide an indication to the pedestrian on the allowable time to cross.

- To improve traffic operations west of the railroad crossing, the radius at the northeast and northwest corners of the Hamilton Street and Francis Avenue intersection will be improved. In addition, exclusive left-turn lanes on Hamilton Street in the westbound direction will be provided at this intersection and at the intersection with New Park Avenue. Also, an exclusive right-turn lane on New Park Avenue in the northbound direction will be provided.

- To improve traffic operations and facilitate truck movements east of the railroad crossing, radii improvements are proposed at the northwest and southwest corners of the Hamilton Street and Bartholomew Avenue intersection.

- Signal timing changes have been incorporated at the Park Street and New Park Avenue intersection to improve the efficiency of the signal operations and lessen the likelihood that traffic will queue up along New Park Avenue to the Hamilton Street intersection.

Mr. Stephen Curley, Project Engineer from the Department's Traffic Engineering Division, indicated that traffic investigation reports were prepared by the Department's Traffic Division for the Office of State Traffic Administration's (OSTA) approval of the proposed signal installations/revisions for the three (3) subject intersections. Approval of these reports is pending concurrence from the City of Hartford's Local Traffic Authority. Subsequent to the Public Information Meeting, the City of Hartford has given their concurrence and the reports are being forwarded to OSTA for approval.

Mr. Gilbert Smart from the Department's Office of Rail Division spoke in favor of the proposed traffic signal preemption system as it will improve the safety of the railroad crossing. The phasing and installation of the preemption equipment will be reviewed after it is installed to ensure it is functioning as designed.

The meeting was then opened for public comment.

Mr. Rory Poole, the business owner of Champlin-Packrite, Inc. of 236 Bartholomew Avenue, asked how the ADT is computed and what time of day are the counts taken. Mr. Morelli, of Baker Engineering, explained that the ADT count is a 24 hour count.

Mr. Poole expressed concerns about congestion that could occur during peak hours when a truck on Hamilton Street, eastbound, is attempting to turn onto Bartholomew Avenue, northbound, at the same time a truck is waiting at the traffic signal on the Bartholomew Avenue southbound approach. Mr. Morelli responded that the wider turning radii proposed at the intersection of Hamilton Street and Bartholomew Avenue is designed for truck turning movements, thereby facilitating the turn for trucks exiting Bartholomew Avenue. In addition, the recent approval by the City of Hartford to remove the on-street parking on Bartholomew Avenue will reduce the constriction that exists today when two trucks are attempting to maneuver in opposing directions at the intersection.

Mr. Poole asked how the preemption system is intended to function. Mr. Curley provided Mr. Poole with a detailed description of the railroad preemption and queue clearance systems operations as it relates to the at-grade railroad crossing and the intended function to minimize queuing on Hamilton Street.

Mr. Poole recommended that "No Turn on Red" signage be used for the southbound Bartholomew Avenue approach. Mr. Curley recommended that the stop bar on Bartholomew may be located further back from the intersection with signage for a vehicle to stop a certain distance from the traffic light, which would ensure that trucks entering Bartholomew Avenue from Hamilton Street have room to make the maneuver. The Department will review the location of the stop bar and investigate the need for the "No Turn on Red" requirement at this location.

Mr. Poole was satisfied with the responses and there were no further questions or comments.

Mr. Tim Wilson adjourned the public information meeting.